

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, WYOMING BRANCH
231 East Wyoming Avenue
Philadelphia
Philadelphia
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6766
PA-6766

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, WYOMING BRANCH

HABS NO. PA-6766

Location: 231 East Wyoming Avenue at B Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania; the Wyoming Branch faces south onto a busy thoroughfare and there is a recreational area to the rear of it.

Owner: The library is part of the Free Library of Philadelphia system and is owned by the city of Philadelphia.

Present Use: Branch Library

Significance: Completed in 1930, the Wyoming Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia was the last of twenty-five branch libraries built through an endowment from industrialist-turned-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The impact of Carnegie's grant program on the development of public libraries cannot be overstated. He came of age in an era when libraries were rare, privately funded institutions and access was through subscription. Believing in the power of libraries to create an egalitarian society that favored hard work over social privilege by allowing equal access to knowledge, between 1886 and 1917 he provided forty million dollars for the construction of 1,679 libraries throughout the nation. The vast resources that he allotted to library research and construction contributed significantly to the development of the American Library as a building type. In addition, by insisting that municipalities supply a building site, books, and annual maintenance funds before bestowing grants Carnegie elevated libraries from the arena of private philanthropy to that of civic responsibility.

Philadelphia was the recipient of one of the largest Carnegie grants for library construction. Although the city was among the first to establish a free library system, it had no purpose-built structures prior to the Carnegie endowment. The branch libraries were built between 1905 and 1930, under the direction of the city appointed Carnegie Fund Committee, and designed by a "who's-who" of Philadelphia's architects. The twenty extant branch libraries remain as a remarkable intact and cohesive grouping, rivaled only by that of New York City, with fifty-seven.¹ The Wyoming Branch was designed by architect for the city, Philip H. Johnson. He was one of only two architects to design more than one of Philadelphia's Carnegie branch libraries; Johnson was also responsible for the design of the Greenwich (no longer extant) and Kingsessing libraries. The land

¹ Carnegie provided funding beginning in 1903 for thirty branch libraries, but with rising construction costs, only twenty-five could be built. Of Philadelphia's twenty-five libraries, four are no longer extant and a fifth (Frankford) has been greatly altered. Four others are no longer used as library buildings. In New York, fifty-seven were still standing, and fifty-four still operating as libraries as of the 1996 publication of *The Architecture of Literacy; The Carnegie Libraries of New York City* by Mary B. Dierickx. The next single largest grants for branch libraries were given to Cleveland (15), Baltimore (14), and Cincinnati (10).

was set aside from a portion of a city playground, the remainder of which is still used for public recreation and is located to the rear of the building. From an architectural standpoint the Wyoming Branch is typical of Philadelphia's Carnegie-funded branch libraries; it follows the almost formulaic understated Beaux Arts styling, T-plan, and brick construction that came to define Carnegie Libraries nationwide. In addition, this building was touted as completely fireproof throughout, constructed with a steel substructure, faced with brick, and including limestone detail elements. It also bears the distinction of being the last Carnegie-funded library built anywhere.

Historian: Catherine C. Lavoie

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The Wyoming Branch was built in 1930.² According to the minutes of the Carnegie Fund Committee, the librarian for the Free Library submitted a proposal for an ordinance to set aside a portion of the city-owned playground at the northwest corner of the property bounded by East Wyoming Avenue, North B, East Loudon, and North Ella streets for the use of a branch library. It was passed by the City Council and signed by the mayor on 30 December 1927.³ City architect Philip Johnson was assigned the task of designing this, his third branch library, in February 1930. A construction contract was then awarded, and ground was broken on 1 March 1930. Opening ceremonies were held on the evening of 30 October 1930 and the following morning the library doors were opened to patrons.⁴

2. Architect: The Kingsessing Branch was designed by Philip H. Johnson (1868-1933). Johnson served for thirty years as the architect for the city's Department of Public Health. He was appointed to the department in 1903, after working for the city's Bureau of Engineering & Surveys. Johnson designed a number of Pennsylvania hospitals such as Philadelphia General Hospital, Philadelphia Hospital for Contagious Diseases, Pennsylvania Homeopathic Hospital for the Insane (in Hanover), The Home for Feeble-minded & Epileptics (in Spring City), The Hospital for the Insane (in Norristown), and Philadelphia Hospital for Tubercular & Insane at Byberry Farms, among others. Johnson designed many hospital additions as well as ancillary structures such as administrative and laboratory buildings, nurses housing, pump and engine houses, pavilions for consumptives, and even farm buildings on those sites that included such therapeutic amenities. In addition, he designed other public health facilities in Philadelphia including bath houses, infirmaries, and facilities for the indigent. Johnson is

² Date stone and dedication plaques located in the entry vestibule.

³ Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 29 March 1928, 188.

⁴ Ibid, 8 January 1931, 220.

also known for the design of the City Hall Annex and the Philadelphia Convention Hall. Other civic designs beyond those directed at public health include city fire houses and police stations, armories, and correctional facilities. Johnson's repertoire also includes recreation centers and playgrounds. It was likely in the context of the latter that he was selected to design three of the remaining five branch libraries yet to be built.⁵

3. Owners: The library is part of the Free Library of Philadelphia system and is owned by the City of Philadelphia. The land for the library was provided by the Board of Recreation of the City of Philadelphia and was set aside from part of a playground that was bound by Wyoming Avenue, B Street, Loudon Avenue and Ella Street. Most of the early library sites were donated by private citizens or local civic organizations. The City of Philadelphia was later be called upon to provide sites, often utilizing parks or other recreation facilities that it already owned in order to complete their building program and round-out the distribution of libraries throughout the city. This lot was made available through an ordinance passed by the City Council and signed by the mayor on 30 December 1927.⁶

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The library was built by George W. Shaner & Sons, General Contractors, at a cost of \$89,889. The contract for the heating was awarded to A. McClintock & Sons at a cost of \$9,147; and to Bulman Brothers for the plumbing at a cost of \$3,636, and finally to Lenning Brothers for the electrical work at \$8,977, for a total cost of \$111,699.⁷

5. Original plans and construction: The Wyoming Branch remains largely as it was when completed in 1930. The building sits on a high foundation in order to provide natural light for the basement meeting/class room. According to a period description, this room measures 51' x 34' and has a capacity for seating 300 persons. Also on the basement level is included a boiler room and storage room, facilities for the library staff, such as a kitchen and lounge area, and public restrooms. The main level contains the general reading room and circulation desk area, with a book capacity of 13, 450 volumes. To the rear of this is the ell section that provides an additional capacity for 6,720 volumes. It was intended that this rear section be used as a Children's room as well as a nighttime lecture hall; there are pocket doors in the opening between the main and rear reading rooms that allow the space to be closed-off for that purpose.⁸ A photograph taken of the library's interior looking from the back of the rear ell towards the front entry shows this section filled with children sitting at the tables that occupy the space and reading their books, a further indication that this area was in fact designated for their use. Above the

⁵ Roger Moss and Sandra Tatman, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930* (Boston: G.K. Hall and Company, 1985), 418-421. Johnson received a contract with the City Health Department that was valid for his lifetime, thanks to the influence of his brother-in-law, Isreal W. Durham who was political boss of the 7th ward.

⁶ Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 29 March 1928, 188.

⁷ Ibid, 4 April 1930.

⁸ Description is transcribed from an unknown source marked JA/F, 28 October 1930, located in the Branch files.

bookcases is a broad frieze upon which were hung pictures, perhaps for didactic purposes, and along the top of this section were mounted sconce lighting fixtures. Ornamental brass chandeliers then hung from the ceiling in both rooms.

6. Alterations and additions: All the branches of the Free Library were renovated in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and again in 1996. The renovation consisted in upgrading the heating and electrical systems, including the replacement of the light fixtures, the remodeling of restroom and kitchen facilities, painting, and the installation of new floor coverings and furnishings. It is worth noting that the kitchen retains its original, unpainted wood cabinetry. The original brass chandeliers were replaced with hanging light fixtures containing half-round glass domes, the wood floors were covered with industrial grade carpeting, and modern bookcases, computer desks and other furniture were added. During the later period of renovation, an elevator and restroom facilities were added on the first floor to the east end of the main reading room.

B. Historical Context:

The Carnegie Funded Free Library of Philadelphia Building Campaign

On 3 January 1903, Carnegie's secretary James Bertram responded to the Free Library of Philadelphia's request for a grant to finance the construction of libraries with the promise of \$1.5 million for a planned thirty branch libraries. Despite the fact that Philadelphia figures quite prominently on the timeline of American Library history, it had no purpose-built public libraries prior to the Carnegie endowment. Philadelphia *did* have the nation's first private subscription library, known as the Library Company, founded in 1731. Numerous other private libraries were created as well, such as the Mercantile Library, Ridgeway Library, and the library at the University of Pennsylvania. And it was in Philadelphia that the American Library Association was formed in 1876. The establishment of the Free Library in 1891 placed Philadelphia among the first American cities to institute a non-subscription public library system for the benefit of all its citizens. As Library Board president J.G. Rosengarten stated in 1903, "Proprietary libraries have grown into valuable adjuncts to our other education institutions. None of them, however, serves the public as does the Free Library, providing good reading for our school children, for our industrious adult population, and for the city's useful employees, firemen, and telegraph operators."⁹ As Rosengarten's comment indicates, the library system was an important component of the city's public education.

However, prior to the Carnegie funding, the city's fourteen branch libraries, each started by interested local communities, were dependent upon old mansions, storefronts, or back rooms of commercial buildings and civic institutions for library space. As Rosengarten points out, "The [Carnegie] gift gave welcome relief from the expense of the rented rooms occupied by the branches, and from much of the risk to which the collections were subjected in these temporary

⁹ Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1917), 85.

quarters.”¹⁰ Likewise, prior to the completion of its permanent home in 1927, the Central Branch of the Free Library was housed within three different preexisting buildings, including City Hall, an abandoned concert hall on Chestnut Street, and a building at the northeast corner of 13th and Locust streets. Carnegie’s \$1.5 million grant would change all that. Beginning in 1905, the endowment was put to work paying for the design and construction of twenty-five branch libraries throughout the city (three of which are no longer extant). They were built between 1905 and 1930, with the bulk of them constructed by 1917, and designed by a wide range of Philadelphia architects.

Philadelphia was just one of many cities to receive a library grant. Andrew Carnegie provided forty million dollars for the construction of over 1,600 libraries throughout the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (and about 400 more abroad). Carnegie was motivated by both his own immigrant experience and by his social/political beliefs. Despite his poor, working-class upbringing, he made a fortune through the production of steel. Believing that the wealthy were obligated to give back to society, Carnegie set out to spend during his lifetime the entire 400 million dollars that he received through the sale of Carnegie Steel Company. Carnegie also believed that given a good work ethic and the proper tools, anyone could be successful. He was self-taught and credited his success to the access he received to one gentleman’s private library. Carnegie came to believe in the power of libraries to create an egalitarian society that favored hard work over social privilege. Hence libraries, as a key to learning and socialization, became a focus of his charitable donations.

While Carnegie’s motivations were in large part paternalistic, the impact of his library campaign is far greater than merely providing the working class with access to books. The vast resources that he applied to this area led to great advances in library science as well as to the development of the American Library as a building type. Carnegie applied the corporate business models that had made him successful as an industrialist to the development and production of libraries. He insured that local municipalities had a stake in their libraries by insisting that they supply the building site and the books, as well as ten percent of the total construction cost annually for maintenance. By so doing, Carnegie took libraries from the arena of private philanthropy to that of civic responsibility. Any town that was willing to meet those terms was basically able to receive grant funding. The process began via a letter of application submitted to Andrew Carnegie’s personal secretary and the individual charged with management of the library grants, James Bertram. In 1903 the city of Philadelphia did just that.

Unlike its rival New York City, Philadelphia’s planning group, the Carnegie Fund Committee, placed librarians and not architects at the forefront of the planning process. This is likely the primary reason for the relative standardization of Philadelphia’s branch libraries, particularly with regard to layout. This important decision on the part of the Library Board was in keeping with the sentiments endorsed by the Carnegie Corporation. James Bertram was generally distrustful of architects as library planners, believing that they tended to make libraries too

¹⁰ Ibid.

expensive by adding unusable space and superfluous detail merely for affect. He preferred the advice of librarians who better understood how libraries needed to function. Both the Philadelphia Library Board and Carnegie Fund Committee included Pennsylvania State Librarian and American Library Association representative Thomas L. Montgomery, and the librarian for the Free Library, John Thomson. President of the Board of Education Henry R. Edmunds was also on the Committee, an indication of the significance of the libraries to public education in Philadelphia. Prominent local businessmen and attorneys filled the other positions. As the Committee minutes indicate, the Librarian and Assistant Librarian were left to work out the details with the architects, and generally had the last say when it came to finalizing the plans.¹¹ (For more information about the Carnegie Library construction program and the Free Library of Philadelphia's own library building campaign see, Free Library of Philadelphia, Central Branch, HABS No. PA-6749, Historical Context section.)

The Wyoming Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia

The Wyoming neighborhood of northern Philadelphia was known early on as Feltonville, named for the several branches of the Felton family that resided in the area at that time. Feltonville was characterized by its rolling farmlands and stately homes. By 1890 the area became known as "Wyoming Valley" or "Wyoming Villa." A train stop on the Reading Railroad located at 2nd Street and Wyoming Avenue allowed for the development of the area as a suburb of Philadelphia. The Wyoming Land and Improvement Association, headed by resident James Eckersley, was created and the surrounding fields were transformed into building lots.

The land for the library was provided by the Board of Recreation of the City of Philadelphia and was set aside from part of a playground and athletic field complex. It was made available to the Library Board by an agreement signed on 30 December 1927.¹² The architect selected was Philip Johnson who worked for the city's Department of Health designing mostly public health facilities and other civic structures. According to the minutes of the Carnegie Fund Committee, the architect expected to have the plans and specifications for the Wyoming Branch completed by 7 November 1929.¹³ Mr. Johnson was well-versed in the requirements of the Carnegie Fund Committee that oversaw the city's library building campaign as he had already designed two other branch libraries—the Kingsessing Branch, completed in 1919, and most recently, the Greenwich Branch (no longer extant), completed just a few months prior.

¹¹ Free Library of Philadelphia, Board of Trustees, Minutes, 1 July 1904. "On motion resolved, that the matter of procuring plans and securing bids be referred to the Carnegie Fund Committee with power." And also, Carnegie Fund Committee Minutes, 17 May 1912. An entry from this meeting (one of many) illustrates that practices: "Mr. Richards [architect] be instructed to prepare plans for the proposed new Paschalville Branch and that the President be authorized to approve plans for such Branch when same were agreed upon by himself, the Librarian, Asst. Librarian and the architect."

¹² Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 29 March 1928, 188.

¹³ Ibid, 4 October 1929.

Construction bids were to be “opened in the office of the Director of the Department of Public Works” on Thursday, 16 January 1930 at 12:00 noon.¹⁴ George W. Shauer & Sons General Contractor was selected at a cost of 89,889 which, with the cost of heating, plumbing, and electrical systems, amounted to a total outlay of \$111,699. Notice to begin work was given by the architect on 1 March and on the same day the digging for the foundation began. Within a month it was reported, “The foundation walls are built to grade, and the cut stone is being laid. All the material necessary is on the ground, with the exception of the steel, but pockets are being left for the steel, so that this does not retard the progress of the work.”¹⁵ By July it was reported that, “The building is well constructed and is progressing in accordance with the schedule.” The exterior was completed and the interior plastering was underway. A date for completion was set by the architect for the first of September, an amazingly aggressive schedule.¹⁶

Interestingly enough, the same minutes report the near completion of a new public high school, Olney Senior High, just a few blocks away. The addition of the new school likely provided further motivation for the construction of the Wyoming Branch. In fact, local school administrators were known to have endorsed library construction as a boon to the education of their students, and the president of the Board of Education, Henry Edmund, headed the Carnegie Fund Committee for many years.¹⁷ It was also reported that the adjacent streets were being paved, giving additional avenues of approach to the library from the north, perhaps to facilitate student traffic. According to the brief branch history provided on the library’s web site, by 1935 the library was so popular among local school children and teens that complaints of noise were regularly made by adult patrons and neighbors. As reported, between 7:30 and 9:15pm (the library closed at 9:00pm), as many as 650 students visited the library to make use of its amenities as well as to “just hang out.”

The minutes for 3 October 1930 claimed that, “The work is practically finished and books are being placed on the shelves. The wooden furniture had been delivered. The aluminum chairs will arrive during the week. The building will be ready for occupancy at any time after October 15.”¹⁸ Finally, the library was ready for its opening event, which was held on Wednesday, 29 October 1930 at 8:30 in the evening. Opening remarks were given by President of the Board of Trustees of the Free Library Dr. Cyrus Alder, the architect Philip Johnson, and by Clarence E. Blackburn of the City Council for the 6th district.¹⁹ The final cost for the Wyoming Branch was \$122,629.74 of which only \$10,830.74 was paid for from the Carnegie Fund, that being all that remained of Carnegie’s endowment. The first “librarian-in-charge” was Miss Florence P.

¹⁴ Ibid, 3 January 1930.

¹⁵ Ibid, 4 April 1930.

¹⁶ Ibid, 10 July 1930.

¹⁷ A letter was sent from J. McCracken, Jr., Supervising Principal of the Samuel D. Huey Public School, 52nd and Pine streets stating that “a number of principals of school in this neighborhood are interested in having a branch of the Philadelphia Free Library established in this locality” and asking for advice on how to go about that. Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 6 March, 1923.

¹⁸ Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, “Report from the Superintendent of Buildings, Wyoming Branch,” October 3, 1930, 218.

¹⁹ Ibid, Minutes, 8 January 1931, 220.

Lawley. The Wyoming Branch was completed in record time, likely due to pressures from the Carnegie Corporation to complete all the branch libraries in order to close the books.²⁰ The completion of the Wyoming Branch marked the end of both Philadelphia's Carnegie library building campaign and that of the Carnegie Corporation in general. The last Carnegie library grant was given in 1917, and the only buildings erected in the years to follow were those for which funding had been previously earmarked. In 1915 the Carnegie Corporation hired economist Alvin S. Johnson to examine their library program and ascertain its success. Johnson's report emphasized the importance of proficiency among library professionals as the key factor in the success of public libraries. The unintended consequence of this report was the termination of funding for library *construction* in favor of funding for library *operations*. Grants were thus awarded to the American Library Association and other professional organizations, as well as to academic libraries and training programs.²¹ The decision to abandon the construction program was made easier by the war-time inflation that served to elevate costs significantly. In fact, Philadelphia's Carnegie library construction campaign had been delayed about the same time by labor and building material shortages brought on by America's entry into World War I. A five year hiatus in the construction of the remaining Philadelphia branch libraries was called after the construction of the Kingsessing and Logan branches was completed in 1918. The Carnegie Corporation grew anxious as the city sought to delay the building campaign until the economic climate improved. Construction finally resumed in 1924 with the Cobbs Creek Branch, followed by Greenwich (no longer extant) and finally, Wyoming. In a 1931 letter from the president of the Library Board, the following statement was made:

With the new Branch Library opened at Wyoming Avenue and B Street, there comes an end the fund for such branches, provided through the generosity of Andrew Carnegie and accepted from sources other than are now known to the Board of Trustees, the creation of branch libraries has come to an end. In making use of this opportunity to bring the Library near to the various sections of the City, careful study was given to the population in those sections. It may be that it has not always been possible to provide for the sections to which population has gone in recent years, but with the improvement in transit facilities, no person living within the City have any real difficulty in securing the advantages offered by the Free Library.²²

In the end, the Carnegie Corporation was responsible for the construction throughout the nation of a staggering 1,679 libraries. Furthermore, the attention that Carnegie had brought to the cause of public libraries encouraged other philanthropists to support library construction within their own communities, which also contributed to the overall numbers.²³

²⁰ In a letter from John Ashhurst to James Bertram it was written, "Dear sir: I write to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of October 9, stating that nearly twenty years ago Mr. Carnegie provided an opportunity for Philadelphia to secure thirty branch library buildings as a cost of \$1,500,000, adding that you have had no communication on the subject for three years and are asking in view of the great lapse of time if the program is finished, so that nay remaining balance may be written off your books." Letter from J. Ashhurst to J. Bertram, dated 6 October 1922, Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 5 January 1923.

²¹ Van Slyck, 217.

²² Free Library of Philadelphia, *Annual Report of the Library Board, 1930*, Letter of the President, dated May 1931.

²³ Van Slyck, 217.

Wyoming is now largely a community of attached and semi-detached row houses interspersed among older homes and commercial property. It is home to a diverse population that includes people of Korean, Cambodian, Haitian, Columbian, Dominican, and Mexican heritage.²⁴ The Wyoming Branch Library and the recreation facilities that adjoin it to the rear are a focal point for community activities. The current manager for the Wyoming Branch is Suzin Rigsby.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The architectural style of the library is Beaux Arts, as was typical of the design of libraries and other civic structures of the era. Noteworthy details characteristic of the style include windows with stone jack arches and patterned brick spandrels, the heavy stone frieze and parapet roofline, and the classically inspired pavilion front with quoining. Stone quoining also appears at the corners of the main block. The library is a single story on a raised basement, with a main block that is seven bays across by three bays deep, and a rear wing that is three-bays-by-three bays, to form a T-shaped configuration. The entry pavilion located to the center of the west front façade has an understated frontispiece featuring pilasters and a broken pediment, and “WYOMING BRANCH” incised in a stone panel above. The typical window is set high on the wall to accommodate the book stacks that line the interior walls. Also on the interior, the delicate Adamesque ornamental plasterwork is of particular note and is among the finest to be found in Philadelphia’s branch libraries. It is painted to accentuate its details. The T-shaped configuration and open plan is typical of the Philadelphia branch libraries in particular and Carnegie-funded libraries in general.

2. Condition of fabric: The library appears to be well maintained and in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The library is comprised of a rectangular main block measuring approximately 94’ x 34’ with a rear ell measuring 46’ x 34’ to form a T-shaped configuration. The building sits on a high basement so that the basement level is only 4’-6” below grade. The ceiling of the main reading room and rear ell measures 20’ feet in height. The lecture hall/class room on the ground floor measures 51’ x 34.’

2. Foundations: The foundations are of poured concrete.

3. Walls: The walls are of brick laid in Flemish bond. A pattern of bricks stacked lengthwise with stone corner blocks form spandrels below the windows. There is a water

²⁴ It is estimated that twenty-seven languages are spoken in the neighborhood, according to information provided at the Wyoming Branch Library.

table of limestone. Likewise, details such as quioning, the cornice, frontispiece, lintels, and other elements are constructed of limestone. The base of the walls below the water table is painted white, with an arbor motif of tree branches and green foliage added to the walls at the front facade.

4. Structural systems, framing: The library has a structural system of steel and was touted upon its completion as a completely fireproof structure.

5. Porches, stoops: A front stoop consists of limestone steps flanked by low walls that once sported cast iron light posts with glass globes.

6. Chimneys: A chimney stack appears at the crux of the main block with the rear ell. It is of Flemish-bond brick with a stone cap.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The front entry is located in a projecting pavilion faced largely in limestone with brick appearing between the quoining at either end. The doorway is flanked by flat pilasters that support a simple entablature with "FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA" incised in the frieze. There is a round-arched broken pediment over the entry, with "WYOMING BRANCH" incised in the square stone panel above it. New double glass doors have replaced the original solid wood doors, above which is a double-height transom light. There are two other entries; one entry is located to the eastern side of the front façade at street level (as opposed to the principal entry which is elevated), and the other is to the east side of the rear ell section, also at street level. The former entry is a later addition and has a simple limestone surround. The latter has an only slightly more elaborate surround to include a simple entablature above the door.

b. Windows and shutters: The typical window is a ten-over-ten-light sash with a large stone jack-arch lintel with keystone, and a stone sill. Spandrels, flush with the walls, are formed by bricks laid on-end with stone corner blocks. Casement windows appear at the basement level and are covered with security grills.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The roof is flat and a plain parapet runs along the upper edge above the stone cornice.

b. Cornice, eaves: A stone frieze with a detailed cornice runs around the building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The library is entered through a vestibule that includes marble steps up to the main floor level where a second set of double doors is found. The walls of the vestibule are flanked by dedication plaques; one credits Andrew Carnegie for the building, and the other, the City of Philadelphia for the land. The interior is basically an open space bisected by the circulation desk to the center and by low shelving to either side, with a large cased opening with pocket doors into the rear ell. The walls of both sections are lined with book shelves. The shelves rest on a high plinth that contains the heat ducts and heat registers; registers also appear above, in the space between the shelves and the windows. There is a simple cornice and an operational skylight to the center of the ceiling in the main reading room. The skylight is surrounded by ornamental plaster, as are the heat registers that flank the skylight and appear in the corners of the ceiling. A section to the end of the main block has been partitioned off to create a work room for staff and a restroom. Free-standing librarians' desks appear in various locations. The children's reading room is located to the western side of the main reading room, the adult reading room is to the south end, and non-fiction books and computers are located in the rear section. At the basement level there is a wide hallway at the bottom of the stairs with a corridor running perpendicular that leads to the librarians' lounge and kitchen, work rooms and rest rooms to the north. There is a large meeting room on the south side. To the east is the boiler room.

2. Stairways: The stairway is located off the rear ell where it meets the main block. A straight run leads to a landing where there is an exterior doorway so as to provide entry to the basement lecture hall without having to pass through the reading rooms. The stairway then turns 180 degrees and continues to the basement. The wood balustrade flows in a single motion to the basement where it terminates in a turned newel post.

3. Flooring: The floor on the main level is covered with industrial grade carpet with a circular pattern of linen and blue linoleum tile around the circulation desk that includes a pattern of figures holding hands. The basement floor is covered with linen-colored linoleum tile with pinwheel patterns in shades of blue in the hallway. A more elaborate pattern with larger squares of blue tiles outlined in tan tiles with corner blocks laid in a checkerboard with blue pinwheels is created in the meeting room.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceiling are of plaster. There is a skylight in the ceiling surrounded by Colonial Revival "Adamesque" style ornamental plasterwork in a garland motif. Ornamental plasterwork also surrounds large circular heating registers located to either side of the skylight and in the corners of the room as quarter-round shaped registers. The ornamental plaster at Wyoming is among the most delicate and ornate to be found within the branch libraries.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The entry vestibule protrudes into the main reading room and is surrounded by unpainted wood casing with a wood entablature above. The large opening between the main and the rear reading rooms is also encased with wood surrounds and includes wood pocket doors and a wood entablature. The doors are also of unpainted wood with glass lights above, appearing in the entry vestibule and leading to the stair hall in the rear ell.

b. Windows: The windows are set in unornamented reveals with wood sills.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: The ducts for the heating and air conditioning are hidden in the high plinth on which the book stacks rest with registers appearing in the plinth and above the stacks (just below the window sills). In addition, heating registers appear in the ceiling surrounded by highly ornamental plasterwork.

b. Lighting: Large half-dome light fixtures hang from the ceiling.

c. Plumbing: Kitchen and restroom facilities are located in the basement, as is a restroom on the first floor.

D. Site: The Wyoming Branch is located along a main thoroughfare, Wyoming Avenue, at the intersection of B Street and was part of the area designated for a city playground. The area in which it was built is largely residential with turn of the century row-housing appearing to the east and north, beyond the playing fields. As the photograph taken upon completion of the library in 1930 indicates, a sidewalk ran past the library extending in both directions, and to the front of the library so that the front steps met with the street. A row of fairly large trees ran along the front of the building between the sidewalk and curb. Those trees are now gone, although there are a few trees along the side street and other plantings exist within the fenced in area to the west side and rear of the library.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views: Free Library of Philadelphia, *Annual Report of the Library Board, 1930*, William H. Rau, photographs.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary sources: The records of the Free Library of Philadelphia are located at the Central Library on Vine Street. The *Annual Reports* are located in the Municipal Reference Division, Cities P53-1154; and the Carnegie Fund Committee Minute Books are located in the Director's Vault (access by special permission).

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the Wyoming Branch Library was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief during summer 2007 as part of a larger initiative to record the Carnegie Funded branch libraries of the Free Library of Philadelphia. The project is sponsored by HABS in cooperation with the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, John A. Gallery, director; and the Free Library of Philadelphia, William J. Fleming, Administrative Services Director, and made possible through a Congressional appropriation for recording in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The historical reports were prepared by Lisa P. Davidson and Catherine C. Lavoie. Large-format photography was undertaken for HABS by Joseph Elliott. Measured drawings were prepared of the Thomas Holme Branch as the typical branch library during the summer 2008. The drawings team was led by Robert Arzola, working with Jason McNatt, Paul Davidson, and Ann Kidd, architectural technicians.